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New National Report

Michigan Ranked One of Worst States in U.S. for Women's Wage Parity with Men

Women Are Paid Only 67 Cents for every Dollar Men Get

Rankings also for Health, Reproductive Rights, Political Influence

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Michigan is one of the few states in the country where African American women working full-time earn the same as white women; but Michigan women continue to earn significantly less than men – 67 cents for every dollar men get, according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) and the Grand Rapids-based Nokomis Foundation.

“Women were being shortchanged when we did our first report on Michigan eight years ago – and they’re still coming up short every payday,” according to Heidi Hartmann, president of the Institute for Women's Policy Research. “At this snail's pace, it will be another half century before working women reach equality with working men in Michigan,” Hartmann said.

***Status of Women in Michigan* first comprehensive snapshot since 1996**

Published for the first time in nearly a decade, the 2004 *Status of Women in Michigan* report ranks women's progress since 1996 in five areas: Employment and Earnings; Social and Economic Autonomy; Health and Well-Being; Reproductive Rights and Political Participation. Comparisons are based on census and other data sources for 50 states and Wash, D.C. Michigan women achieved slight improvements in some social and economic indicators, reproductive rights and levels of political influence, but still face gender-based inequities.

Employment and Earnings: C-

Compared to the 1996 report, Michigan slipped from 27th to 33rd in the nation, with a composite score of “C-” in the *Employment and Earnings* section, despite relatively high median annual incomes for women.

Michigan's overall score was dragged down by the gap between men's and women's wages. According to IWPR, Michigan women earn two-thirds of what Michigan men earn for full-time employment. Although the ratio improved from 62% in 1996, Michigan women lost ground compared to women in other states, including the other four states in the North Central Region: Illinois, Indiana, Ohio & Wisconsin.

On the positive side, Michigan is one of only five states where the median earnings of African American women are equal to or higher than white women's (\$30,900, compared to \$46,400 for men) for full-time work. Interestingly, Asian women's earnings were slightly higher (\$35,300) than all other ethnic groups. The state ranked 10th in the nation and 1st in the region for women's business ownership, with 27 percent of Michigan businesses owned by women. Women's participation in the labor force has remained relatively steady at 59 percent for the last decade.

Health and Well-Being: D+

Poor Mental Health, Diabetes and Heart Disease rates high

Michigan received one of its worst composite scores in the area of *Health & Well-Being*, ranking 37th overall and earning a D+ score. The state ranks in the bottom two states for the incidence of poor mental health. Michigan women are more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes than women in all but six other states, more likely to die from heart disease than women in 41 other states, and likelier to die of breast cancer or lung cancer than women in most other states. However, the incidence of AIDS among women is the lowest Michigan has seen in recent years, at 3.2 per 100,000 women.

Michigan women's high death rates from cancer and heart diseases are linked to smoking rates significantly higher than other states. As of 1995, a higher percentage of women 18 to 29 years old smoked in Michigan than any other state.

Social & Economic Autonomy (C), Reproductive Rights (D-), Political Participation (B)

Michigan received its highest composite score in the area of *Women's Political Participation*, scoring 2nd in the country and "B" overall, up from 24th in 1996. The improvement is based primarily on the election of U.S. Senator Deborah Stabenow and Governor Jennifer Granholm, as well as a slightly higher than average percentage of women in the state legislature. However, Michigan is losing ground in this category, as well. The number of women state legislators will drop in January 2005 to 19 (from the

present 24) in the House and is holding at only 11 in the Senate, while the pipeline of women city and county elected officials slowing to a trickle.

In the area of *Social and Economic Autonomy*, Michigan received a “C” score and 25th overall ranking, up slightly from its 28th ranking in 1996. Among the key findings: Michigan women are more likely than women in the nation to own a business with the state ranking 10th nationally; more than one in 10 Michigan women live below the poverty line. The IWPR adds that the federal poverty line “probably understates the degree of hardship among women” by not adequately including the real costs of housing, child care, health care, and transportation.

Michigan remains one of the ten worst states for *Reproductive Rights*, earning its poorest composite score (“D-“, 42nd rank, up from 45th), despite having a pro-choice governor. Key factors include: health insurers not being required to provide comprehensive coverage for contraceptives or infertility treatments, and minors requiring parental consent for an abortion.

“Women’s economic power, health, and voices are essential to well-functioning families, strong communities and the state’s competitiveness,” said Kym Mulhern, CEO of the Nokomis Foundation. “We hope this report will provide a clearer picture of the opportunities and dangers facing one of the state’s most valuable resources: Michigan women.”

The *Status of Women in Michigan*, including focus reports on African American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American women, violence against women and prostitution, will be available online at www.nokomisfoundation.org. The Nokomis Foundation is a private, Grand Rapids foundation focused on creating a stronger voice for women and girls.

The report recommends policies to improve the status of women, including:

Michigan should address the state’s fiscal crisis with long-term solutions that help provide resources needed by women and their families to achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency in the wake of funding cuts to education, health care and social services.

Recruitment of female candidates by political parties, and campaign finance reform.

Living wage laws statewide and in Michigan localities and a higher federal minimum wage.

Improved educational and job training opportunities.

State laws mandating insurance companies to cover mental health on par with physical health and to cover contraceptives.

Increased funding for programs to help victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Calling on women to step forward and strive for leadership roles in communities, business, and in government at all levels.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research will also issue a national report, *The Status of Women in the States*, at a 9:00 a.m. news conference today in Washington.D.C. IWPR is a nonprofit, public policy research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families.

NOTE FOR REPORTERS AND EDITORS: For a free copy of the Michigan or national report, email sinzdak@iwpr.org. Copies are available to the public for \$20 each from the IWPR at www.iwpr.org.